

made out. First they desired that the central Government should cease to be corrupt, and that the money wrung from the public at a time of general distress should be honestly spent for public purposes, and not appropriated by a small clique. Secondly, they desired that local order should be kept, especially in the country districts, where the anarchical elements that got the upper hand in the next century during the Wars of the Roses, were already at work. The lawless retainers of the nobles and the bands of discontented peasants on strike were equally offensive to the small gentry and yeomen. Next the Commons required that the war should be efficiently conducted to an honourable, if not a successful, end. They asked not for peace but for better conduct of the war. In spite of the losses inflicted by the enemy's fleet on the coast districts, in spite of the pressure of taxation on the inland counties, we never find a petition of the Lower House for peace. In this matter the nation showed more spirit than good sense. If the hopeless war had been brought to a close before Edward the Third's death, instead of ten years later, the country would have been spared much misery ; but it was not unnatural that the memory of Crecy and Poitiers should induce the Commons to attribute the disasters of the war to no other cause than the undoubted corruption and inefficiency of the ministers. Although these considerations united to throw the Commons into strong opposition to John of Gaunt and his friends, there was one question on which they sympathised to some degree with his policy. The desire to reform and tax the Church was shared by laymen of both parties. Even the Commons of the Good Parliament, after acting with the Bishops against the Duke for two months of session, sent up a score of petitions against ecclesiastical abuses.¹

The House of Lords, unlike the House of Commons, was not a party in the State, but a battleground of parties, and still more of personal interests and ambitions. It is impossible to say how far affairs in the Upper House were decided by taking the opinion of the hundred and odd lesser peers, how far by agreement between the leaders alone. There

* *Rot, P&rL*, it 333, pet. xv., pp. 3S7-840, pets, adiv-lvl., p. 842, pet, lix*